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## CONTENTS

<b>EDITORIAL</b>	3 – 4
Dr Ian M Randall	
<b>AFTER THE GRAVE IN THE AIR:</b>	5 – 11
<b>True reconciliation through unconditional embrace</b>	
Professor Miroslav Volf	
<b>THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION</b>	12 - 22
<b>IN BAPTIST PERSPECTIVE</b>	
András Szirtes	
<b>PAUL’S UNDERSTANDING OF THE</b>	23 - 28
<b>OLD TESTAMENT IN ROMANS:</b>	
<b>Some Exploratory Comments</b>	
The Revd Ilmars Hirss	
<b>IDENTITY AND MISSION:</b>	29 - 42
<b>The return to the redemptive tension between</b>	
<b>church and culture</b>	
Dr René Erwich	
<b>DEVELOPING THE CONCEPT OF AN</b>	43
<b>ECO-SEMINARY</b>	
The Revd Keith G Jones	
<b>THE EURO-ASIAN ACCREDITING</b>	44 - 45
<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	
Dr Peter Penner	
<b>BOOK REVIEWS</b>	45 - 48

## EDITORIAL

IBTS was delighted to have Professor Miroslav Volf from Yale Divinity School as the Nordenhaug lecturer for 2001. These lectures are a reminder of the desire within IBTS to continue a tradition of scholarship which is rooted in the life of Baptist congregations. Josef Nordenhaug (1903-1969) was a distinguished president of the seminary from 1950 to 1960, when it was in Switzerland. Under his leadership, the faculty was enlarged and the student body strengthened. Josef Nordenhaug had gone from Norway to the USA for his theological studies and completed a doctorate there. He was committed to pastoral work. After his studies in the USA he served for a short time in Norway as associate pastor of the first Baptist Church in Oslo, before returning to the USA, where he had pastorates in Kentucky and Virginia. He then became editor of *The Commission*, the world mission journal of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

As seminary president from 1950, Nordenhaug's influence spread into all parts of Baptist life in Europe. Given his range of experience, it is not surprising that the Baptist World Alliance sought to utilise Nordenhaug. In 1960 he became the Executive Secretary of the BWA. He worked hard to bring the Baptists of the world closer together and to make Baptist witness known among other Christian world bodies. His untimely death in 1969 prevented him from finishing his full term of service with the BWA.

In recognition of Josef Nordenhaug's ministry as a pastor, theologian and Baptist leader, the Nordenhaug Memorial Lectures were established in order to provide an opportunity, every two years, for specialists in their field from different countries to give lectures designed to assist pastors in their work of Christian ministry. Lecturers over the years have included David S. Russell, Jan Milič Lochmann, Jürgen Moltmann, Emilio Castro, Günther Gassmann, Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and I. Howard Marshall. The original intention was that the lectures should be available in print, and we are delighted, therefore, that this Journal can now become a vehicle for that to happen.

Professor Volf's well-attended lectures, on 'Suffering, Memory and Redemption', covered a number of different themes. In the first he spoke about how suffering causes memories that take away freedom. The second lecture continued the theme of memory, pointing out that memories give people their role – their identity, and the richness of their identity. Memory brings joy and pain. It is essential for healing from the injuries of the past that we deal with memories. The third lecture was probably the most striking. In heaven, Professor Volf argued, memories of all evil things will

have ended, since heaven is a place where the knowledge of God fills us in a way which leaves no place for the memory of the sufferings of the past. Thus redemption has been completely fulfilled.

This issue of the Journal, as well as featuring the first of Miroslav Volf's lectures in theology, contains a theological analysis of issues in soteriology from a Hungarian Baptist perspective. András Szirtes is a lecturer in systematic theology at the Baptist Theological Seminary, Budapest, a pastor of the Baptist Church in Gödöllő, Hungary, and a Research Associate of IBTS. He presents the main lines of present-day Hungarian Baptist teaching on salvation, comparing the Hungarian Baptist confession of faith of 1967 with the text of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* which was signed on 31 October 1999, in Augsburg, by representatives of the Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches. This article is a fine example of reflection on a particular Baptist theological tradition. In doing so Szirtes places his tradition in a wider theological context and shows that Baptist theology can engage critically and yet constructively with ecumenical theological exploration.

The other two articles in this issue are in the fields of biblical studies and missiology. Ilmars Hirss, who is the General Secretary of the Union of Baptist Churches in Latvia and engaged in ThD studies at the University of Latvia in Riga, offers a stimulating discussion in the field of hermeneutics. From René Erwich, the Director of Mission and Evangelism at IBTS, we have an important study of contemporary issues in relation to church and culture.

As the *Journal of European Baptist Studies* moves into another year, we anticipate publishing further work that is of significance for Baptists in Europe and the Middle East. Knud Wümpelmann, who was the General Secretary of the EBF and the President of the Baptist World Alliance, will be 80 this year. We are delighted that in the next issue we are going to be publishing a tribute to Knud Wümpelmann written by Bent Hylleberg, who is Dean of studies at the Scandinavian Academy of Leadership and Theology, SALT.

We are pleased to have submitted to us articles that relate to the life of European Baptists. Our mission is to feature articles that will contribute to the growth and health of Baptist witness in Europe and the Middle East.

**The Revd Dr Ian Randall**  
Director of Baptist and Anabaptist Studies, IBTS

## **‘AFTER THE GRAVE IN THE AIR’: True reconciliation through unconditional embrace**

*While terrorists destroyed the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001, Professor Miroslav Volf was only a few blocks away, speaking at the 16th Annual International Prayer Breakfast at the United Nations. His remarks on reconciliation turned out to be relevant in a way that could not have been envisaged. On 5 and 6 November 2001 Professor Volf gave the Nordenhaug lectures at IBTS on the theme ‘Suffering, Memory and Redemption’. The first of his three lectures followed, to a large extent, the text of his address on 11 September and is reproduced here by his kind permission.*

Allow me to start by drawing your attention to the character of the world in which we live. I will not do so by quoting statistics about the many dangers and sufferings in our world; instead I will offer a meditative text by a young Jewish poet, written immediately after World War II. It is a poem with unpredictable rhythms, a poem with grim metaphors, a poem with a startling combination of tenderness and brutality. Here is the first stanza of the poem.

Black milk of daybreak.  
We drink it at evening.  
We drink it at midday and morning.  
We drink it at night.  
We drink and we drink.  
We shovel a grave in the air.  
There you won't lie all too cramped.  
A man lives in the house.  
He plays with his vipers.  
He writes.  
He writes when it grows dark to Germany,  
Of your golden-haired Margarita.  
He writes it and steps out of doors.  
And the stars are all sparkling.  
He whistles his hounds to come close.  
He whistles his Jews into rows,  
Has them shovel a grave in the ground.  
He commands us ‘play up for the dance’.

This poem must be one of the most remarkable literary creations about the most infamous event of the twentieth century. The event is the Holocaust; the poem is Paul Celan's ‘Death Fugue’.<sup>1</sup> Behind the outlandish

<sup>1</sup> For ‘Fugue of Death’ see Paul Celan, *Selected Poems* (trans. Michael Hamburger and Christopher Middleton), (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 108 pp.

images of digging graves ‘in the air’ as well as ‘in the ground’, and words about ‘playing up for the dance’, lies a brutal reality. It was common practice in Nazi concentration camps to order one group of prisoners to play or sing nostalgic tunes while others dug graves or were executed. Young German men who were cultivated enough to occupy themselves with writing, and who were tender enough to daydream about their girlfriends’ golden hair, were masters of death.

Now the Holocaust is in many ways unique, perhaps not so much in its scale and brutality as in its technological sophistication and the single-mindedness with which murderous intentions were directed against particular people. But the reason that I quote from this poem is because in so many places in the world today, similar things are happening. In many respects, the Holocaust is not an anomaly in the world in which we live. Death is not just a blue-eyed master from Germany.

Rivers of blood have flowed and mountains of corpses have grown more recently in my own country, Croatia, as also in Macedonia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and other places. They all bear horrifying testimony to the fact that the world in which we live is also a world in which the most brutal practices of exclusion are the order of the day. And I have not even mentioned what happens in the living rooms in our countries. Statistically, it is the case that most of the violence in this world does not happen on battlefields but in homes, between estranged spouses, parents and children, and siblings.

The poem that I quoted, ‘Death Fugue’, ends with the following line: ‘Your golden hair, Margarita - your ashen hair, Shulamite.’ It is clear who ‘Margarita’ is: the blond-haired German girl, the romantic ideal drawn from Goethe’s poetry, of whom the executioner tenderly daydreams.<sup>2</sup> But who is ‘Shulamite’? This may not be so evident. Shulamite is no ash blonde, but the black and comely maiden of the Song of Songs, whose hair has grown pale because the ash of burning has fallen on it. Shulamite is the Jewish people, experiencing the most horrific events in their history. When, in ‘Death Fugue’, Paul Celan puts together Margarita and Shulamite, nothing can reconcile them – they stand next to each other as symbols of the unbridgeable gap created by unspeakable evil.

It is understandable why this would be so for Celan; when he wrote this poem, the ovens that had sent his own parents and many of his kin into their grave in the air had barely cooled down. But the issue remains for us today. Can we simply leave Margarita and Shulamite side by side as symbols of the lack of reconciliation that governs so prominently the affairs

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<sup>2</sup> See also Michail Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita* (Ontario: Signet, 1967), with its indebtedness to Goethe’s *Faust*.

of our world? Or can we do something to reconcile estranged individuals and peoples? Sometimes it feels as if very little – almost nothing – can be done to make our world a more peaceful place; nothing except maybe to keep ‘containing the situation’ – until the next outburst of violence takes place.

I want to draw your attention to the resources offered by the Christian faith for fostering more peaceful social environments. In a world of suffering and alienation I wish to argue for the crucial importance of reconciliation – the reconciliation of humanity to God and the reconciliation of peoples and individuals to one another.

Now some might object that religion is often not a positive influence in the world of social relations. Religion, Christianity included, can and does cause conflicts. In my experience, however, Christianity is a factor in conflict –

- (1) when it is regarded as primarily a cultural resource, a marker of a particular group's identity, in the name of which the group then struggles against another group, rather than as the living faith of individuals and of whole communities; and
- (2) when there is only a superficial (though not necessarily lukewarm!) relationship to that faith, when one has not been inducted into, sustained and nurtured by a longstanding tradition of that faith. Those who have been nurtured in the Christian tradition are more likely to become agents of peace than perpetrators of violence. That is a controversial claim, I know, but there is important work being done on the dynamic link between the task of theology and the practices of the Christian life.<sup>3</sup> A similar claim to promote peace could probably be made by other religions, but, at any rate, I think it stands for the Christian religion.

So it is important to look at the resources for creating more peaceful social environments that lie at the centre of the Christian faith. One of them, as I mentioned, is the notion of reconciliation. I want first to dispose of two unacceptable notions of reconciliation and then to advocate a third one.

One unacceptable notion of reconciliation is what some people have called cheap reconciliation. Cheap reconciliation sets in contrast justice and peace. To pursue this sort of ‘reconciliation’ means to give up the struggle for freedom, to give up the pursuit of justice. It means to put up with oppression. If we were to pursue such cheap reconciliation, it is clear that

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<sup>3</sup> See M. Volf, ed., *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

this would amount to the betrayal of those who suffer injustice, violence, and deception. But I think also that this would amount to the betrayal of the Christian faith. As I read the Christian message, a prophetic strand which denounces injustice has a prominent place in it. You cannot, I suggest, take away that prophetic strand from the Christian faith without gravely distorting it.

Cheap reconciliation, I think, is what has taken place in many countries in recent decades. Oppressive regimes have been replaced by more just governments, but those who committed crimes were never brought to justice – in the name of national reconciliation. The strategy was: ‘do not rock the boat’. That kind of strategy has its own virtues but has significant disadvantages as well; above all disregard for the suffering of the oppressed.

If I see things rightly, in western cultures cheap reconciliation is not so much of a problem. If anything, the temptation there is to pursue justice without even asking questions about reconciliation. That brings me to the second unacceptable notion of reconciliation. This might be described as follows: first justice, then reconciliation. Once the requirements of justice have been satisfied, it is said, then we can sit around the table and talk about reconciliation. I suggest that this way of going about ‘reconciliation’ suffers from at least three major problems.

First, taken seriously, this stance – first justice, then reconciliation – is impossible. As Friedrich Nietzsche – not a theologian but nonetheless a valuable dialogue partner for theologians – rightly noted, given the nature of human interaction, all pursuit of justice not only rests upon partial injustices but also creates new injustices.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, all accounts of what is ‘just’ are to some extent relative to a particular group and therefore invariably contested by rival groups. Those who have two or more children know exactly what I am talking about. How do you get to the bottom of the little quarrels that happen between children? It is virtually impossible, because each of them has their own perspective on the events. Multiply that in a certain way, and you get the situation of nations. So no peace is possible within the over-arching framework of strict justice, for the simple reason that no strict justice is possible.

Second, even if justice could be done, it would be insufficient, because justice done would not really bring estranged people together. In order to have healing, it is necessary to have people brought together and reconciled.

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<sup>4</sup> I have used Nietzsche extensively in this way in my *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).



One of the reasons why this is so is because our identities, our personal and collective identities, are not simply self-contained and internally determined; rather, they are always shaped by interaction with other people. I am Miroslav Volf, not only because I am distinct from my wife, Judy Gundry-Volf, but also because over the past twenty years I have been shaped by a relationship with her. This holds true also for nations. I can refer to my own nation. It happens to be the case that to be a Croatian means to have Serbs as your neighbours. A person may not like such a situation, and we Croatians certainly have not liked it at certain points because it was a difficult relationship. But that is the way it is. So, because the 'other' is part of my own identity, my own healing depends on the healing of the relationship with the other.

Third, justice pursued first – in addition to being strictly impossible and anyway insufficient – would also be undesirable. Recall the Old Testament law 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'<sup>5</sup> We may think that this is very excessive, very harsh; and yet when we think about it more deeply, it is not sufficiently just. Let us say that somebody breaks my tooth. How can it be just if, in recompense, I or somebody else breaks only one of that person's teeth? Our relationship is asymmetrical: I have not done any wrong to that person. So it would seem that at least two of his teeth ought to be broken! Then we might have something like justice. But it should be clear that if we pursue 'street' justice in such ways, the result will be a maimed and finally humanly unsustainable world.

As an alternative to these two unacceptable ways to understand reconciliation by relating it to justice, I want to look at the resources that lie at the very heart of the Christian tradition. At this centre we find the narrative, the story, the event of the cross of Christ as an act of reconciliation of God with humanity. On the cross of Christ, God is manifested as the God who, though in no way indifferent toward the distinction between good and evil, nonetheless lets the sun shine on both the good and the evil; as the God of infinite and indiscriminate love who died for the ungodly in order to bring them into divine communion; as the God who offers grace even to the vilest evildoer.

I want to draw four implications from this Christian account of who God is for our understanding of inter-human relations.

First, the will to embrace another person is unconditional. The starting point must be the primacy of the will to embrace. Since the God of Christian belief is the God of unconditional love and the God who died for the ungodly, the will to embrace the other, even the evil other, is a fundamental Christian obligation. The will to give ourselves to others and

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<sup>5</sup> Exodus 21:14.

‘welcome’ them, the will to readjust our identities to make space for them, is prior to any judgment about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity. The will to embrace precedes any ‘truth’ about others and any construction of their ‘justice’. This will is absolutely indiscriminate and strictly immutable; it transcends the moral mapping of the social world into ‘good’ and ‘evil’.

This is a scandal when you think about it. But it is qualified by my second point. Truth and justice are preconditions of actual embrace. Notice that I have described the will to embrace as unconditional and indiscriminate, not the embrace itself. A genuine embrace – an embrace that neither play-acts acceptance nor crushes the other – cannot take place until the truth has been said and justice established. Hence the will to embrace includes in itself the will to find out what is the case and the will to determine what is just; the will to embrace includes the will to rectify the wrongs that have been done and the will to reshape relationships so as to correspond to truth and justice.

But does this not bring us back to the unacceptable first justice, then reconciliation? Not quite. For, in the third place, the will to embrace is the framework of the search for truth and justice. How do we find what has transpired between people so as to be able to pursue truth and justice in a particular case? My argument is this: Unless you will to embrace the other and be reconciled to her, you will not find what is truth and what is justice. For you can always interpret somebody's outwardly generous action as a covertly violent action – as a bouquet of flowers in which a dagger is hidden. You have to want to see the other's goodness in order actually to perceive it – provided, of course, that the other actually does manifest goodness.

Fourth and finally, embrace is the horizon of the struggle for justice. As in many of our activities, so in the struggle for justice: much depends on the *telos*, on the goal of that struggle. Towards what is it oriented? Is it oriented simply towards ensuring that everyone gets what each one deserves? Or is it oriented towards the larger goal of healing relationships between people? My contention is that it must be oriented precisely toward the latter goal. The reason for this is simple. You will have justice only if you strive for something that is greater than justice, only if you strive after love.

In conclusion, in addition to emphasising the priority of embrace, while not disregarding justice, I want to offer an invitation to creativity. In this lecture I do not have time to suggest some of the ways in which I believe the members of a Christian community can acquire the will to embrace or practise embrace in concrete situations, whether in their personal or in their

more communal lives. I pray that God will grant each of you wisdom to find creative ways to practise embrace in our world shot through with violence.

**Professor Miroslav Volf** is Henry B Wright Professor of Theology at Yale University Divinity School and visiting Professor of Systematic Theology at the Evangelical Theology Faculty, Osijek, Croatia. He was educated in his native Croatia, then at Fuller Theological Seminary in California. He earned doctoral and post-doctoral degrees from the University of Tübingen, Germany. Professor Volf has published and edited nine books, including *Toward a Theology of Work*, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* and *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Togetherness, and Reconciliation*.

### **The Hughey Lectures for 2002**

will be held at  
IBTS, Prague on  
4 and 5 November  
2002

The lecturer will be  
**Dr Tadeusz Zielinski from Poland**

Dr Zielinski was, until recently, a member of the Polish Parliament. He lectures in theology at the Warsaw Baptist Theological Seminary and within the theological faculty of the University of Warsaw

His PhD was on Roger Williams and soul freedom

The subject of this year's lectures will be

### **‘Baptists and Politics’**

*For more information check the IBTS web site or email [White@ibts.cz](mailto:White@ibts.cz)*

## THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION IN BAPTIST PERSPECTIVE<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

On 31 October 1999, that is Reformation Day (commemorating the day when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg), representatives of the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation signed an important document in Augsburg, Germany. It was the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (JD)<sup>2</sup>. The document itself, and the whole process of ecumenical negotiations behind it, can and should be evaluated from different points of view. It can be viewed in terms of ecumenics – the significance of the document and its influence on ecumenical processes within Western Christianity. There are specific theological perspectives. Also, historical and political analyses can be employed. The ecumenical and theological approaches focus on the theological issues within JD (and the preceding documents of the dialogue). A related systematic/dogmatic point of view could rightly examine exactness of formulation, conformity with biblical revelation, aptness for communication to people today and relationship to soteriology and the whole of dogmatics. Historical and political approaches prefer to look for intentions, or to examine the public/media communication or the pure fact of the signing of the document. The content of the document can be analysed in terms of doctrinal history: in connection with doctrines debated in the Reformation period and subsequently. Moreover there are practical questions, one of the most important of these being how extensive is the gap between academic theology and church preaching or teaching.

In this article I will use the document on justification as something that provides a good opportunity for considering an important term in Protestant theology, and also some related questions, from the perspective of our Anabaptist-Baptist heritage. JD will be used as a background text in our inquiry, focusing on its theological content only. First I will place the question of justification within Anabaptist-Baptist soteriology. Then I will reflect on some basic questions: I am going to present the main lines of present-day Hungarian Baptist teaching, comparing our confession of faith

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<sup>1</sup> Based on a presentation at an ecumenical conference in Budapest, 11 March 2000.

<sup>2</sup> The text of JD can be easily downloaded from site [www.elca.org/ea/jddj/jddj.htm](http://www.elca.org/ea/jddj/jddj.htm) (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).

of 1967<sup>3</sup> with the text of JD.

Finally, a comment is necessary on the idea of a ‘Baptist perspective’. This study is done by one (Baptist) theologian: there is no community consensus – except the text of the confessions – behind my observations; therefore it involves some subjectivity. Of course this will appear not only in the reading of JD, but also in the reading of Baptist confessions and their theologies<sup>4</sup>. Having said this, I want to be open to dialogue and ready to learn from others. I hope that the following will verify this.

## **Justification and Soteriology in the Anabaptist-Baptist Heritage**

From the beginnings of Anabaptist, and later Baptist life, the preaching and teaching within these movements, as within other branches of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation, gave evidence of a belief that the doctrine of justification by faith alone had a fundamental place. In the time of the Reformation there was also a strong anti-Catholic polemic associated with this doctrine<sup>5</sup>. In the different English Baptist confessions of faith of the seventeenth century one can easily find the passages on justification. It is important to see the characteristics of the Baptist way of thinking. What are they?

In contrast to Luther’s thinking and subsequent Lutheran theology, the concept of justification is not of such central significance in Baptist theology. This is true both of Baptist confessions and the wording of gospel preaching in Baptist churches. The changes in human beings brought about by the gospel of salvation through the work of Christ, by grace and through repentance and faith, are expressed by the concepts of conversion/believing (acceptance of Christ) and regeneration by the Holy Spirit<sup>6</sup>. The (legal) concept of justification, as it is found in Lutheran theology, is subordinate. This can be illustrated from representative English Baptist confessions of

<sup>3</sup> A new Confession of Faith of Hungarian Baptists was accepted in 1967. (*Baptista hitvallás, Békehirnök kiadó*, 1989.) English translation by J Macher and L Gerzsenyi in G Keith Parker (ed.), *Baptists in Europe* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1982) pp. 185-199. In the following abbr. as HCF (Hungarian Confession of Faith).

<sup>4</sup> Among Baptist confessions of faith there are clear contradictions on questions of soteriology. See later.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. ‘Eighteen Dissertations’ by Balthasar Hubmaier (1524), in W L Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge: The Judson Press, 1959). We will take the text of different confessions of faith from this book.

<sup>6</sup> H W Robinson takes believers’ baptism as his starting point to investigate basic Baptist principles. The first is ‘the significance, the necessity and the individuality of conversion’. The second is ‘the spiritual authority of the New Testament, and of the Lord it reveals to us’, and obedience to his will. The third is the church, which is a spiritual community of the converted. H W Robinson, *Baptist Principles* (London, 1938) pp. 16-27.

the seventeenth century<sup>7</sup>. Baptists in North America have also emphasised repentance and faith as basic for a person's acceptance with God.<sup>8</sup>

The question of primary importance in Baptist soteriology is how one can or will be saved; hence the interest one finds in the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation)<sup>9</sup>. Justification is never an independent topic; it has its meaning and significance only within the whole of the way of salvation and the working out of that salvation. This affects crucial areas of church practice such as evangelism and counselling. The Baptist interest is always in making disciples, not solely in convincing people that they are freed from guilt. Thus interest in the *ordo salutis* indicates that questions of salvation and the place of the believer before God cannot be narrated using only the concept of justification<sup>10</sup>.

There are different emphases regarding salvation in Baptist confessions of faith, as there are in Reformed theology<sup>11</sup>. The main differences come from the divergent interpretations of election/predestination, although it is also notable how much agreement there can be between Calvinistic and Arminian confessions<sup>12</sup>. Nonetheless, there are different explanations of phrases such as calling, faith, and perseverance. A passage on justification can be found in almost every elaborate Baptist confession, and despite the variances there is a common core. This core can be easily delineated: justification is possible by grace alone (*sola gratia*), and by faith alone (*sola fide*); and this is an act of a judicial (forensic)

<sup>7</sup> The Calvinistic Baptist *Second London Confession* (1677) speaks about effectual calling (Chap. 10); it is God who 'converts a sinner' (9.1) and 'in their [the Elect's] Effectual Calling giveth them Repentance unto Life' (15.1). *The Standard Confession* (General Baptist) of 1660 has the following: 'The way set forth by God for men to be justified in, is by faith in Christ,... that is to say, when men shall assent to the truth of the Gospel,... shall commit (with godly sorrow for the sins past) themselves to his grace ... such so believing are justified from all their sins, their faith shall be accounted unto them for righteousness.' (VI).

<sup>8</sup> '... without repentance and faith, it [Christ's atonement] can never give him justification and peace with God.' (*A Treatise on the Faith of the Free Will Baptists*, 1948, 12.1); 'Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ.' (*Baptist Faith and Message*, Southern Baptist Convention, 1963, IV.A) In the former version of *Baptist Faith and Message* there are three elements of salvation – regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. The 2000 revision adds justification. HCF usually refers to the believer as 'new-born'/'regenerated'.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. József Nagy, 'Az üdvösség útja', *SzET*, 1980, pp. 9-10.

<sup>10</sup> '... the new-born man is not only justified by faith in Jesus Christ but also becomes a child of God.' (HCF 7.2) Reference to HCF 7.2 means the second passage in Section 7.

<sup>11</sup> I use the term 'Reformed' referring to that branch of Reformation which was started by Zwingli and Calvin in Switzerland (i.e. in contrast to Lutheran and Radical/Anabaptist).

<sup>12</sup> In the 17<sup>th</sup> century there were two groups of English Baptists, (later) named General and Particular Baptists, referring to their views on the extent of Christ's atonement. Their theologies were rooted in Arminian and Calvinist Reformed (Five-Point-Calvinism) thinking. Such differences – though with modifications – can be found among Baptists up to the present. Hungarian Baptists basically belonged always to the 'General' trend. Cf. József Nagy, 'Az üdvösség útja', pp. 308-10.

nature, the Father imputes Christ's righteousness to the believer and accepts him or her<sup>13</sup>.

The concept of sanctification is closely related to that of justification, with sanctification seen as marking not the beginning of Christian experience, but the living out of the Christian life itself. A recognisable change in one's lifestyle arising from conversion was a demand that was emphasised from the very beginnings of our Anabaptist and Baptist traditions. The first significant Anabaptist confession of faith (produced at Schleithem, 1527) speaks about this in its section on separation from the world<sup>14</sup>. 'The idea of separation is encountered in practically every wing of the Baptist Movement, though understanding of the practical consequences of separation varies among the several branches.'<sup>15</sup> This does not mean either perfectionism or cancelling out *sola fide*, but it stresses the necessity of good works, which, as the *Second London Confession* of 1677 put it, 'done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith'.<sup>16</sup>

Soteriological emphases also have ecclesiological consequences: the visible church has visible boundaries. The change defined (among other things) by the concept of justification ought (again according to the *Second London Confession*) to be evident in each church member's life. These members are the 'visible saints'<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. the following quotations from a Calvinistic and an Arminian confession:

'Those whom God Effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth, not by infusing Righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting, and accepting their Persons as Righteous; not for any thing wrought in them, but for Christ's sake alone, not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their Righteousness; but by imputing Christ's active obedience unto the whole Law, and passive obedience in his death, for their whole and sole Righteousness, they receiving, and resting on him, and his Righteousness, by Faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.' (*Second London Confession*, 1677, 11.1)

'Justification is a declarative, or judicial sentence of God the Father, whereby he of his infinite love, and most free grace, for the alone and mediatorial righteousness of his own son, performed in our nature and stead, which righteousness of God-man, the Father imputing to us, and by effectual faith, received and embraced by us, doth free us by judicial sentence from sin and death.' (*The Orthodox Creed*, 1679, Ch. 24)

<sup>14</sup> 'From all this we should learn that everything which is not united with our God and Christ cannot be other than an abomination which we should shun and flee from. By this is meant all popish and anti-popish works and church services, meetings and church attendance, drinking houses, civic affairs, the commitments [made in] unbelief and other things of that kind, which are highly regarded by the world and yet are carried on in flat contradiction to the command of God... Therefore there will also unquestionably fall from us the unchristian, devilish weapons of force – such as sword, armour and the like, and all their use [either] for friends or against one's enemies – by virtue of the word of Christ, Resist not [him that is] evil.' (Schleithem, Chap. 4. On separation)

<sup>15</sup> Lumpkin's note, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, p. 26.

<sup>16</sup> *Second London Confession*, 16.2.

<sup>17</sup> 'All persons throughout the world, professing the faith of the Gospel, and obedience unto God by Christ, according unto it; not destroying their own profession by any Errors everting the foundation, or unholyness of conversation, are and may be called visible Saints; and of such ought all particular Congregations to be constituted.' (*Second London Confession*, 26.2)

This perspective has an important role in formulating doctrines about baptism, the Lord's Supper and church discipline. It deserves attention that the Schleithem Confession deals with baptism in chapter 1, with the 'ban' in chapter 2, and with 'the breaking of bread' in chapter 3. This placing of the question of discipline 'in the middle' reveals a significant theological understanding of salvation, church, sacraments and their relationship with each other<sup>18</sup>. Church discipline has always had a dominant place among the characteristics of a Baptist church (*notae ecclesiae*).

## Reflections on Some Classical Soteriological Questions

### The Central Biblical Message: Justification as the Heart of the Gospel?

The biblical explanation of the nature of justification in JD takes John 3:16 as its starting-point. I think this is fortunate. For many ordinary Baptist believers it is something with which they can identify, because this verse contains the essence of the story of God's love for us. Of course, this message of the gospel is interpreted and explained in the Bible in various ways. It is an ongoing task of doctrinal theology to keep alive precisely this salvific dynamism, and not to suppress it with a hurried narrowing down of salvation to some abstract terms, and not, above all, to one term, say justification. In JD, unfortunately, certain aspects of the relationship between God and humankind set out in scripture remain unrecognised because of the stress on dogmatic discussions, and we cannot find the biblical bases in JD for some topics discussed there (e.g. nature and awakening of faith, work of the Holy Spirit).

### The Basic Doctrinal understanding of the Gospel

There is a basic doctrinal understanding of the gospel in the Protestant heritage, which builds upon the principles of the Reformation (*solus Christus – sola gratia – sola fide*). This is formulated in JD (15), and is in agreement with the passage on salvation in the Confession of Faith of Hungarian Baptists (HCF). On the other hand, HCF sees justification as a part of the whole of salvation – a missing point in JD; thus HCF can sum up more fully all the elements of the *ordo salutis* to be detailed below. The principles of Reformation are applied by HCF to the whole of the way of salvation, and to the wholeness of redemption. Thus HCF says:

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<sup>18</sup> 'Second. We agree as follows on the ban: The ban shall be employed with all those who have given themselves to the Lord, to walk in His commandments, and with all those who have been baptized into the one body of Christ and who are called brethren and sisters, and yet who slip sometimes and fall into error and sin, being advertently overtaken. The same shall be admonished twice in secret and the third time openly disciplined or banned according to the command of Christ. Mt. 18. But this shall be done according to the regulation of the Spirit (Mt. 5) before breaking of bread, so that we may break and eat one bread, with one mind and in one love, and may drink of one cup.' (Chap. 2.)



We believe that the salvation of sinful man is provided by the grace of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who sacrificed himself as mediator. He fulfilled the requirements of the divine law, freely and obediently and by his death on the cross obtained perfect propitiation for our sins; he rose from death on the third day for our justification, ascended to heaven and, at the right hand of the Father, He – as the only mediator between God and man – intercedes for us. (HCF 4.1)

### The Universality of God's Grace

The universality of Christ's atonement, emphasised in JD (16), is an important conviction for Hungarian Baptists. According to HCF: 'We believe that God – by his eternal, gracious decision – offers salvation through Jesus Christ to all men without respect of persons.' (HCF 4.2). We cannot find this concept of the universality of God's grace in every Baptist confession. *The London Confession* of 1644 speaks of 'salvation and reconciliation only for the elect'<sup>19</sup>, but among Baptists the message of universal grace has spread more and more, due to the revival/awakening movements from the eighteenth century onwards and the more optimistic vision of humanity espoused in the Enlightenment. Out of the classical system of five-point-Calvinism only the 'perseverance of saints' has remained in a specific form in, for example, most twentieth-century Southern Baptist thinking<sup>20</sup>.

Answering the question how one receives this salvation, theology usually points to the work of the Holy Spirit and also to our faith. JD seems not to take seriously enough some important biblical insights in this area. Concerning the work of the Holy Spirit, the statement of JD – the Spirit 'who works through word and sacrament in the community of believers' (JD 16) – is confusing. It seems to set limits to him who 'blows wherever he pleases' (John 3:8). The document refers only to believers as objects of the work of the Holy Spirit. However, regarding the awakening of faith in a person, it is also essential to consider the work of the Holy Spirit in non-believers (together with the biblical basis for this). Speaking about faith, HCF (5.1) explains our ability to understand and grasp God's word as being enabled by God, but it wants to balance this (divine) side with the

<sup>19</sup> 'That Christ Jesus by his death did bring forth salvation and reconciliation only for the elect, which were those which God the Father gave him.' (*London Confession*, 1644, Chap. 21). It goes on to say that God calls the elect by the gospel, and gives them faith.

<sup>20</sup> 'All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end.' (*Baptist Faith and Message*, SBC, 1963, Chap. 5.) This formulation replaces the classical term 'elect' by the concept of 'true believer', which is not a well-defined term, and open to psychological explanations. It is worth noting that some doctrinal uncertainty has arisen among Hungarian Baptists concerning perseverance or 'eternal security', which may be partly due to American influence.

human one, i.e. personal faith.<sup>21</sup> Therefore it says: 'Man is free to accept or to reject the offered grace.' (HCF 4.2). When JD says, 'we receive salvation in faith', but sees faith only as 'itself God's gift' (JD 16), this wording conceals from view the character of faith as response.

### The Way from Sin to Faith

Humankind is absolutely in need of divine grace, to which nothing can be added (cf. JD 19-21.); on the other hand everyone has the responsibility of accepting the offered grace. The Baptist understanding wants to emphasise both sides of this twofold truth. The analysis of coming to faith ('illumination', in the order of salvation<sup>22</sup>) shows some relationship with the Catholic concept of 'preparation'<sup>23</sup>, but the idea of 'co-operation' is wholly unknown in traditional Baptist theology. Acceptance is the dominant *motif* in the idea of being illuminated: a person is passive at that point. The end of this process is conversion, when 'the sinful man turns from the state of condemnation to the way of life'. (HCF 6.1) A fixable date for or a psychological description of this spiritual change is not important; what is vital is that it has happened, the evidence being the 'fruits of repentance' (Lk. 3:8, HCF 10.1), and that it can be recognised. In all these aspects Hungarian Baptist theology lays stress on the work of the Holy Spirit (HCF 6.1), which is duly supported by Scripture (Jn. 16:8-11, 1Cor. 12:3). Unfortunately, this aspect is missing in JD.

HCF has sections that correspond to paragraphs in JD (22-24) on 'Justification as Forgiveness of Sins and Making Righteous'. For HCF, in thinking about conversion, both the new situation of acceptance with God (justification, but also sonship, cf. HCF 7.2) and the new life in Christ, which has its fruits afterwards, are essential for true conversion. We emphasised that the change in the believer's life is of great importance for Baptist theology, but this does not mean that justification is somehow diminished in Baptist soteriology, since everything else makes sense only in the light of this new status of acceptance in which believers are found. Thus HCF:

We believe that the man who turns to God by faith is new-born, newly created through the Word and the Spirit of God, whereby he is enabled to love Jesus

<sup>21</sup> HCF's understanding is largely consistent with that of John Smyth, who in his *Short Confession* (1609) writes the following: 'We believe that men, of the grace of God through the redemption of Christ, are able (the Holy Spirit, by grace, being before unto them *grace prevemènt*) to repent, to believe, to turn to God, and to attain eternal life; so on the other hand, they are able themselves to resist the Holy Spirit, to depart from God, and to perish for ever.' (Point 9) Lumpkin remarks that this confession is 'more Anabaptistic than Calvinistic'. (Lumpkin, p. 99).

<sup>22</sup> Nagy, 'Az üdvösség útja', pp. 179ff.

<sup>23</sup> McClendon takes 'preparation' as the first stage on the Christian journey, followed by 'conversion', 'following' and 'soaring'. James Wm McClendon, *Doctrine, Systematic Theology II* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994) pp. 137ff.

Christ and to live according to the will of God. (HCF 6.2)... We believe that justification is God's gracious act, whereby the new-born believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is acquitted from all accusations and judgements of sin and declared righteous....The fruit of justification is the relationship and peace with God. (HCF 7.1)

### **By Faith and By Grace Alone**

In the governing understanding of *sola fide* in JD – namely, that faith is inseparable from the works springing necessarily from it, but that these works are not the basis of justification – the relationship between *sola gratia* and *sola fide* appears clearly. It corresponds to our Baptist interpretation, as follows:

Justification is not gained by our own righteous deeds, but only through the sacrifice and the righteousness of Jesus Christ we receive it by faith. (HCF 7.1)...True faith is testified in good works because faith apart from works is dead. (HCF 5.2)

Hungarian Baptists distinguish, however, in HCF, between two elements of faith: knowledge and confidence (HCF 5.2). The latter is important because of the personal nature of relationship with God; therefore it has its place here, and it is a pity that Luther's own idea of confidence in God is not emphasised strongly enough in JD's presentation (cf. JD 26.)

Human responsibility in accepting the offered grace is a point that is stressed in our Hungarian Baptist understanding. Concerning responsibility, I do not have in mind a faith arising from the person himself/herself, but I consider that we ought to give proper weight in our systematic theology to those words of the Bible which call people to faith or blame them for unbelief. This question of biblical interpretation – which is firmly linked to the question of the nature of predestination – confirms that soteriological problems are to be considered in a broader theological perspective, even if this is a challenging task. JD focuses on justification, but this makes it unable to handle the question of human responsibility in an appropriate way. Explaining faith, HCF does not use the word 'gift' (cf. JD 25). It says: 'We believe that God in his eternal grace enables man to acknowledge Him, to understand His Holy Word with his mind, and to accept it in his heart. By the accepted Word man comes to faith...' (HCF 5.1).

In connection with this question of faith, JD (25 and 27) also mentions – but without any detailed explanation – the matter of baptism. I find the wording of the text of JD here – which takes for granted that baptism is infant baptism, i.e. as in Catholic and Lutheran understanding – contradictory. It is not clear how justification by faith could be equated to, or what kind of relation it has with the granting of the gift of salvation to

the sinner. This gift comes ‘by the action of the Holy Spirit in baptism’, which, says JD, ‘lays the basis for the whole Christian life’. We do not touch here on the issue of the Baptist understanding of, and commitment to, the baptism of believers.

### **The Christian as Sinner**

The ‘twofold status’ of the believer – which is described using the concept of *‘simul iustus et peccator’* (at the same time righteous and a sinner) in traditional Lutheran theology – functions as a kind of presupposition in the chapters in HCF on Sanctification and Preservation (HCF 8), and also on Church Discipline (HCF 14). However Baptist theology is not so concerned with the differences between Lutheran and Catholic theology discussed in the passages of JD (29-30) that deal with this topic. We rather stress the fight against the desires of the ‘old man’ and against temptation; confession of faults that have been committed; reconciliation with God and other people (cf. HCF 11.2, on the Lord’s Supper); and our need of grace, as regards the whole of life. Temptation is not itself sin, but the fact that the justified person can still yield to temptation shows that the justified person still feels the power of sin. Nevertheless, says HCF, during the process of sanctification ‘the new-born man progresses gradually toward moral and spiritual perfection’. (HCF 8.1)

By and large something similar can be said about the classical Lutheran twin-concept of law and gospel in relation to Baptist thought. That is, this conjunction is not so characteristic of Baptist theology as it is of Lutheran. Baptists express the relationship between the law and the gospel, and the validity of law for the believer (JD 31-33) with different words, and perhaps are laying emphasis on different points. For Baptists the call is primarily to follow Christ, not the law.

### **Sanctification: The Christian Way of Living**

In the first few decades of English Baptist life in the seventeenth century, Baptist theology drew a great deal from the Reformed tradition. However, it would be false to say that this is the reason why Baptists stress sanctification. Obedience to the will of God, and a desire to follow Jesus and his example, had already been of great significance among the early Anabaptists of the previous century. The holiness of the believer’s life has been an important topic in Baptist sermons across mainland Europe from the nineteenth century up to today. But the Baptist confessions of faith link this life according to the will of God to regeneration rather than to justification. For example, in HCF:

We believe that the man who turns to God by faith is new-born, newly created through the Word and the Spirit of God, whereby he is enabled to love Jesus Christ and to live according to the will of God. The reality of the new birth is testified by a life lived according to the example of Jesus Christ. (HCF 6.2)<sup>24</sup>

The Baptist focus on a life lived according to the example of Jesus Christ is significant. The traditional language of theology, which HCF (5.2) also uses, speaks about ‘good works’ (cf. JD 37-39), without which faith is dead. But Baptists see a living faith as energised by the Spirit. The good works are ‘fruit’, produced by the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life (HCF 9.1), and thankfulness for the grace of Christ manifests itself in this fruit. The latter – which is an important point also in Reformed theology (cf. The Heidelberg Catechism) – is unfortunately missed out of JD. It is important to state that good works cannot be considered simply as the outcome of justification: it would be better in this context to speak about conversion and/or regeneration as other vital elements of the *ordo salutis*, for they express more clearly the moral change in a person. HCF points out the importance of deeds in its chapter on testimony, too. ‘The testimony is pleasant before God and men if it does not only consist of words but is represented by deeds, as well.’ (HCF 15)

The term ‘merit(orious)’, which is used in Catholic vocabulary, and is also present in the text of JD, is completely confusing, and makes one think that human beings could contribute to their own salvation. At this point it is worth pondering whether certain expressions should be completely withdrawn from a document such as JD, because they are surely misunderstood, especially by church members who may have little training in being sensitive to minute theological details.

In its chapter on sanctification HCF speaks about ‘growth’, and sees the healthy Christian life as one of progress, though not in a perfectionist sense; it is clear that while human beings do not contribute to their salvation, nevertheless good deeds have a part to play in growth:

We believe that sanctification is carried out by the power of the Holy Spirit, whereby the new-born man progresses gradually toward moral and spiritual perfection. The believer’s sanctification is supported by self-examination, self-denial, fervent prayer, study of the Holy Scripture and exercise of Christian fellowship. (HCF 8.1)

## Assurance of Salvation

By the accepted Word man comes to faith and ... gains assurance of salvation, and becomes convinced about the invisible realities. (HCF 5.1)

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<sup>24</sup> The *New Hampshire Confession* says that sanctification ‘is a progressive work, that is begun in regeneration, and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit...’ (Chap. X)

Faith is ... a strong confidence in our heavenly Father. (HCF 5.2)

That part of Reformation theology which emphasises the trustworthiness of divine promises concerning assurance of salvation is important also in Baptist theology and spirituality, since personal commitment and experience of Christ are fundamental for Baptists. But HCF does not take this assurance or perseverance as something which can be grasped apart from a relationship of confidence placed in God and Christ. Believers are kept in God's love not because of a fixed predestination or a 'perfect' experience of conversion (whatever it means), but by God's power, which is ours only by faith and in the way of faith. This is the understanding we have of faith alone (*sola fide*).

We believe that preservation is the work of God's special providence to the believer who truthfully follows Jesus Christ. The new-born child of God is supported by the Holy Spirit, therefore he is victorious over temptations in spite of his weaknesses, and faithfully stands for Christ till the end; and finally he gains the crown of eternal life. (HCF 8.2)

## Conclusion

By engaging in these comments on parts of HCF and JD we have accomplished only a part of the necessary work of interpreting the key questions of soteriology. We have tried to mark out the distinctives of our Anabaptist-Baptist tradition as expressed especially in one Baptist document – the Hungarian Baptist Confession of Faith. Other points of view and other questions can and will arise. I have approached the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* using – one may say – something of a hermeneutics of theological suspicion, and the euphoria about the document that has characterised certain church leaders is missing in my commentary and arguments. I do not believe that there is a proper place for such euphoria, and I want to encourage Baptists to discover again the riches of their own theological heritage, but we may be glad to have a document that reveals some degree of Catholic-Protestant consensus after so many centuries of dogmatic battles, especially concerning justification. I hope that this present study has at least succeeded in stimulating and enriching further theological thinking.

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## PAUL'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN ROMANS:

### Some Exploratory Comments

#### Sources of the Old Testament quotations in Romans

In his quotations from the OT, not only in Romans but also elsewhere, Paul does not follow some identifiably simple and consistent pattern. We can see that he does not feel forced in every case to reproduce a text exactly. On the other hand, it would be a serious mistake to conclude that he has not paid attention to detail in his quotations.

Looking at Paul's textual sources, we also find that they are not homogeneous. His dependence on the latest Greek translations is generally admitted, but there is good reason to consider that he was also acquainted with the original Hebrew texts, which, at least in some cases, have determined the way he has used the OT.<sup>1</sup> In order to complicate the question even further, it has to be noted that the Greek text of the OT was not homogeneous either. Sometimes Paul's quotations even reflect different, mixed texts.<sup>2</sup>

Those technical details are important for the following reason. If Paul is quoting a fragment of the OT in a way that is different from a standard Greek text but is found in isolated, latest translations or the Massoretic Text (MT), the majority of scholars explain it as a deviation caused not by Paul but a textual tradition.<sup>3</sup>

The last complicated question to be considered is variations of the text in Paul's own epistles.<sup>4</sup>

#### The role of exegesis

When Paul's quotations differ from the Septuagint (LXX) and MT, the reason should not necessarily be regarded as important. In the same way as we sometimes refer to a textual fragment without quoting it directly, this

<sup>1</sup> O. Michel, *Paulus und seine Bibel* (Darmstadt, 1972).

<sup>2</sup> For example, in Romans 9:27-28 Paul quotes Isaiah 10:22-23 in a form very close to a code A but in the place of the word θεσζ Paul uses κυριοζ that is read in a code B.

<sup>3</sup> The usual example is 1 Corinthians 15:54. Paul's quotation of Isaiah 25:8 differs from LXX and corresponds to a later translation of Teodicy. Still the question remains: if a text quoted by Paul is not found in LXX, MT or any other Greek translation, is Paul himself responsible for the changes?

<sup>4</sup> For example, in 1 Corinthians 9:9 Paul quotes Deuteronomy 25:4, and the verb he uses is κημοω but LXX uses φιμοω. It is interesting to note that the same verse is quoted also in 1 Timothy 5:18 but in this case the word φιμοω is used.

procedure is also found in Paul's writings.<sup>5</sup> Differences arise because of the character of the indirect quotations, and they do not have to be considered as something significant; it does not mean that a speaker regards the words as unimportant or insignificant. Many of Paul's quotations seem to belong to this category, for example, Romans 3:15-17 (Isaiah 59:7-8). Therefore I would argue that the fact that they contain word differences should not be regarded as a consequence of Paul's hermeneutics. This does still leave open the question as to how we can tell cases in which word differences are hermeneutically significant. Let us look at this.

There are many quotations where word differences do have an importance for exegesis. A very interesting example is 1 Corinthians 2:16, where Paul quotes Isaiah 40:13a from LXX: 'For who has known the mind (νοῦς) of the Lord?' In the Hebrew text there is the word 'spirit' (*ruah*), not 'mind'. It is possible that the translators of LXX tried to explain the meaning of the original word with the help of an interpretation. It is clear that Paul could have changed the Greek word 'νοῦς' into 'πνεῦμα', if he had wanted to do this. But it is quite possible that here his usage was intentional, and this may offer an insight into how Paul used the Scriptures and the role of LXX in his theology. The second chapter of 1 Corinthians concentrates on the Spirit, who gives us the opportunity to know God (see 1 Corinthians 2:11). In his conclusion to this discussion Paul turns to Isaiah 40:13 and ends with the statement: 'But we have the mind of Christ.' But the context of Paul's discussion (and of the Hebrew original) shows what Paul meant: 'We have the Spirit of Jesus, therefore we truly know Jesus.'

It could, therefore, be true that the interpretative translation of LXX itself becomes a source for the development of Paul's teaching.<sup>6</sup> In order to understand Paul's application of the Scriptures we have to look beyond word changes. Many fragments that contain exact quotations can reflect important principles of interpretation. And, on the contrary, fragments that do not contain exactly formulated quotations can reveal Paul's exegesis in a particular way.

## The meaning of the OT Scriptures for Paul

The subject matter of Romans helps us to gain insights into how Paul understands and uses the Scriptures. He explains this very clearly in 4:23ff and 15:4. For Paul, the OT Scriptures have an instructive function. The true meaning of the Scriptures has been revealed with the coming of Jesus Christ. Jews will understand the Scriptures correctly only if they accept the

<sup>5</sup> For example, 'Jesus said that we could do nothing without him' is a direct reference to John 15:5, although the exact quotation is 'for apart from me you can do nothing'.

<sup>6</sup> G Hawthorne, *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, pp. 63-4.



message of the gospel. The starting point for understanding the OT is the new era that has come through Christ, that is, the inauguration of God's kingdom in this world in Christ. A key text for Paul's understanding of the OT is 1:1ff.<sup>7</sup> Here Paul draws a line from the prophets to Christ and, further, to himself. Therefore Paul sees himself as a preacher of a gospel that was promised through the prophets long ago. Thus the authority of the Scriptures for Paul is bound up with their centre in Christ and he can interpret them in ways that are different to Jewish interpretations in order to substantiate this line of thought. Paul sees a way of salvation already set out in the OT. Therefore important concepts in the OT, such as faith, justice, the Law, circumcision, and the image of Abraham, are to be interpreted so that they agree with, and substantiate, Paul's understanding of Jesus. Paul takes the OT concepts but changes their application.

In opposition to the common Jewish understanding of justification, in Romans 3:20 Paul quotes from Psalm 143:2, indicating a concept of justification by faith that he has supported in Romans 1:17 from Habakkuk 2:4. In doing this he slightly changes the OT quotations. Paul has to add to Psalm 143:2 because he wants to retort - ἐξ ἐργῶν νόμου. In the way that he quotes these OT verses Paul changes their thrust in order to reject and refute Jewish percepts.

Paul understands the OT not only as a witness to salvation as it is known in Jesus Christ; in the OT Scriptures he also sees a refutation of the commonly-understood Jewish way of salvation (see, for example, Romans 10). Paul's interest in the OT has, therefore, a soteriological character.

From the quantitative and qualitative use that Paul makes of different parts of the Scriptures it is clear that he does not prefer a certain set of OT writings. He does not, for example, attribute to the Torah a greater significance than that which he attributes to other parts of Scripture. If this were not the case, Paul would certainly quote more of the Torah.<sup>8</sup> Neither does Paul mark out separate parts of the Scriptures as teaching different understandings of salvation; he understands them as a unit.<sup>9</sup> For Paul, God is the same, whether he speaks through Abraham or through Isaiah.

It is clear that the OT, as the revelation of God, has a profound meaning for Paul. His setting out of the way of salvation in Romans and elsewhere is based upon the OT Scriptures. In his contacts with Jews Paul uses the

<sup>7</sup> Romans 1:1-4: 'Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord.'

<sup>8</sup> G Hawthorne, *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, p. 631; G Riese, *Die alttestamentlichen Zitate im Römerbrief*.

<sup>9</sup> E E Ellis, *Paul's use of the Old Testament*, pp. 150-73.

Scriptures as a very important witness. There is, therefore, continuity between the OT and the NT.

In Paul's understanding, however, the OT Scriptures only prepare the way of salvation; they cannot bring it into being. Therefore in Paul's thinking the Law has no value to the believer in Christ as a basis for salvation. The moral requirements of the Law remain, but Paul does not see typical Jewish prescriptions as binding on the Christian.<sup>10</sup> Paul flatly rejects the belief that salvation is obtained through keeping the Law.

Nonetheless, in Paul's theological thought, the OT Scriptures not only contain a promise of future salvation; they also contain crucial soteriological teaching. Paul considers that the OT narrates the salvation history of the people of God before Christ, but also that it helps its readers to understand and interpret the salvation that has now come in Jesus Christ. The NT events are not something entirely new; the prophets had already anticipated them.<sup>11</sup>

For Paul it is without question the same God who has been revealed in the OT and in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, it is also evident that Paul's understanding of God was radically changed by his encounter with the risen Christ. It is now faith, not the keeping of the Law, that is seen as the way to God. We can understand the meaning of the Scriptures in Paul's life only if we accept that he comes to the OT with this prior understanding.

Paul does not take away the OT Scriptures from Judaism; rather, through his explanations he wants these Scriptures to become understandable to both Jewish and Gentile Christians. Paul accepts that there is a genuine Jewish zeal for God<sup>12</sup>, but he considers that his fellow-Jews do not have the right understanding of the OT Scriptures to which they are so committed.

## **Paul's interpretation of the OT Scriptures**

Paul's interpretation of the OT Scriptures is built up in two ways. On the one hand, it is determined by Paul's prior understanding of the OT in the light of Christ, and on the other hand by the topics he deals with in his epistles. It is because of these two basic preconditions that we find Paul 'reading in' his thought into OT texts as he quotes them.<sup>13</sup>

The example of the quotation from Habakkuk 2:4 in Romans 1:17 clearly shows Paul's prior understanding of the OT. The interpretation he gives in Romans 9-11 shows how deeply Paul has been influenced by the

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<sup>10</sup> Romans 14:14f.

<sup>11</sup> Romans 1:2ff

<sup>12</sup> Romans 10:2-3: 'For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.'

<sup>13</sup> G Riese, *Die alttestamentlichen Zitate im Romerbrief*, p. 444.

topic of the epistle he is writing – the theme of salvation for Jews and Gentiles. Often Paul's interpretation of a text is *Christological*. For example, Romans 9:33 and 10:11 quote from Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16. The whole of this section in Romans has a strong Christological emphasis. Initially these OT quotations referred to God, and it is the knowledge of Jesus Christ that has given Paul a key for the interpretation of the OT texts. This close connection between the OT and the gospel of Christ is clearly seen in Romans 15:21, quoting Isaiah 52:15. Paul, in common with other NT writers, understands the Isaiah passage Christologically.

Because Paul approaches the OT with a definite focus on salvation in Christ it becomes understandable that on some occasions he *universalises* the OT texts. Some statements in the OT cannot, in his thinking, be strictly applied only to Jews, because salvation refers to Jews and Gentiles alike.<sup>14</sup> Paul also widens the application of Jewish laws. For example, Leviticus 19:18, the command to love your neighbour, is, by contrast to Jewish understanding, universalised by Paul in Roman 13:9.

This broadening should mean that Jews are still included. But in chapters 9-11 Paul faces difficulties in explaining why many Jews do not accept the gospel of Christ. Paul argues that God in his calling acts freely; he is sovereign.<sup>15</sup> This free choice is a mystery of God's plan of salvation. Israel, however, is not rejected, as Paul shows in Romans 11:4 (quoting 1 Kings 19:18 – see below). By reference to the OT, Paul explains that Israel has become hardened but is not rejected. The promises of the Scriptures are for a part of Israel – those who believe in Christ (Romans 10:17). The reason for such a 'restriction' is that the Gentiles may also be saved. For Paul, both restriction and universalisation are soteriologically well-founded.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, in his interpretation of the OT Scriptures Paul interprets historical material relating to Israel as the history of salvation for all people. In Romans 11:3-5 (cf. 1 Kings 19:10-18) Paul uses the history of Israel in this way, referring to the fact that Elijah believed that he alone had remained faithful to God. Yet through God's own voice Elijah found out that 7,000 men had remained faithful to God. This is applied by Paul in Romans 11:4 to his own time, using a principle of analogy. In the same way this principle of analogy is used in Romans 9:6-13. Paul explains the choosing of people for salvation against the historical background set out in the OT story of Isaac.

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<sup>14</sup> Therefore Abraham in Romans 4:17 (Genesis 15:5) becomes a father to both Jews and pagans. From that it follows that pagans also belong to the elect in Romans 9:25 (Hosea 2:25) and Romans 9:26 (Hosea 2:1).

<sup>15</sup> Compare with Romans 9:14ff.

<sup>16</sup> G Riese, *Die alttestamentlichen Zitate im Römerbrief*, 444-447

## Conclusion

The way in which Paul's quotations from the OT in Romans are applied by Paul shows that Paul's use of the OT Scriptures cannot be put in some stiff scheme of interpretation. Rather, many of the references to the OT Scriptures can be described as 'fundamental sentences of the apostle's hermeneutics'.<sup>17</sup> Paul's interpretation of the OT Scriptures, as we have seen, is not homogeneous. He is willing to make new applications. Importantly, he can use the Scriptures to argue against a Jewish way of salvation. Yet the fact that Paul does not interpret the Scriptures homogeneously does not diminish the authority of the Scriptures.<sup>18</sup> The uniting element in Romans is the stress on faith. The justification of Abraham based on his faith is an OT example of salvific work. For Paul, we also can be justified, by faith, through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Paul's teaching on this topic unites him with the promises of the Old Testament.

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<sup>17</sup> O Kuss, *Romerbrief, Bd. I*, p. 193.

<sup>18</sup> P Vielhauer, *Paulus und das AT. In: Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie der Reformation*, p. 48.

# IDENTITY AND MISSION

## **The return to the redemptive tension between church and culture**

### **Introduction**

Speaking about the identity of the church is a risky enterprise. Despite this, it is quite trendy to do so. In our desire to speak about identity it may be that we are forgetting to look at the word of God – which according to James is the mirror in which we see ourselves. Have we as evangelical Christians forgotten the mirror of God's love?<sup>1</sup> It seems to be the case that the more troublesome the identity of the church appears to be, the more theologians and sociologists of religion and philosophers wish to engage in writing and speaking about it. There is the danger of just being trendy. However, the current crisis of the church in the West does urge us to consider the theme of identity in relation to her mission. In this article I will claim that we need to rediscover and redevelop the missional identity of the church in order to strengthen the mission work of the church in the current cultural climate in Europe. In part this means returning to a situation in which the church is in a healthy tension with the dominant culture. First of all we will look at current perceptions of the situation in which the church finds itself which clears the ground for recovering identity. Secondly, we will develop a perspective on the concept of identity. Thirdly, this will be developed into a concept of the missional church.

### **Current perceptions: a marginalised church and redemptive tension**

There are wide variations in current observations regarding the church. W.R. Shenk, one of today's leading missiological thinkers, highlights the loss of credibility of the church. According to Shenk, the church in the West is the 'Christendom church', a church 'without a clear sense of mission in relation to its culture. But a church without mission is an anomaly, a caricature of what it was intended to be'.<sup>2</sup> He holds the strong conviction, as do others, that we need to use biblically-informed concepts to describe the relationship between world and church again. The vision of the church in missionary encounter with the world, he argues, has to be

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<sup>1</sup> James 1, 23-24 (NIV).

<sup>2</sup> W R Shenk, *Changing Frontiers of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999), pp. 118 ff.

rediscovered.<sup>3</sup> The church is no longer a key force in the shaping of social order in the West; her influence has been marginalised.<sup>4</sup> G.R. Hunsberger takes a similar line. He makes the observation that on the basis of this changed location of the church in society and the changed values in culture, there is a serious crisis in mission identity and what he calls the direction of mission.<sup>5</sup> He would like to see a profound analysis of modern Western culture and theological reflection on the claims of the Gospel combined with the renewal of the church.<sup>6</sup>

Others are quite willing to speak about a crisis, and not just a crisis in the Western church. J. Campbell<sup>7</sup> states that ‘The fall of modernity and the rise of something else are being felt on every continent.... Modern culture is in crisis. The church is in crisis. Having been shaped in and by modernity, the church has been marginalised by modern culture, and now further marginalised by postmodernity’. However, Campbell is more optimistic than some about the opportunities that are given to us in the current postmodern climate. The way in which the church will respond will determine, he suggests, whether she will either isolate herself or engage in the battle.<sup>8</sup> The language of ‘battle’ is one way to respond to the crisis. In an article on Newbigin’s contribution to the discussion of the calling of believers in the mission of the church, however, M. Goheen<sup>9</sup> employs the richer term ‘redemptive tension’. He is referring to the beginnings of the Christian church where there was a redemptive tension between the Christian community and the culture. The church in that period was a missionary community – hence ‘redemptive’ – and was more a kind of contrasting society, her identity being understood in terms of (and I will return to this term) ‘resident aliens’.<sup>10</sup> Goheen continues his analysis:

This contrast community was not a community that ignored the public life of society by being reshaped into a private institution that provided an otherworldly and spiritual salvation for its members. Rather it was publicly subversive by a life of radical discipleship that existed as a kind of antibody in society. However, with the Constantinian shift the story that governed the church's life and the story that governed cultural development were merged. The redemptive tension was lost, as the church became part of the constellation of powers within the empire. Her

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>4</sup> According to G R Hunsberger in *Acquiring the Posture of a missionary church*. Source: [www.deepsight.org](http://www.deepsight.org).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> These three foci are at the heart of the Gospel and Culture movement.

<sup>7</sup> J Campbell, ‘Postmodernism: Ripe for a global harvest – but is the church ready?’ In: *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (1999): Vol.35, No.4.

<sup>8</sup> Campbell, Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> M Goheen, *The Missional calling of Believers in the world: Lesslie Newbigin’s Contribution*. Source: [www.deepsight.org](http://www.deepsight.org).

<sup>10</sup> Also Shenk in *Changing Frontiers of Mission*, p.128. Tension was present with the socio-political order; Christians were seen as those who ‘turned the world upside down’.

identity was shaped by her place in culture rather than by the story of the kingdom of God. The end result was cultural captivity.<sup>11</sup>

Support for this approach does not come only from those within the Radical Reformation tradition. A. Van de Beek, the successor of H. Berkhof (systematic theologian at the University of Leiden, Netherlands), is impressed by the way, as he sees it, that the early church – and not only the communities in the first century – had a critical attitude towards the dominant culture.<sup>12</sup> In his recent writings, in which he tries to develop a more counter-cultural theology, he opposes uncritical positive thinking about dominant culture in the church. For him this leads on to embracing the culture without reviewing its main positions. Our attitude towards culture, he suggests, should be an attitude of unmasking. He points out that the Spirit unmasks the world, through the church, in a threefold way. First of all, the Spirit reveals to people that a new way of life is possible. It is possible to build a community living in love and faithfulness. The mindset of the world is unmasked. Secondly, the suffering of the church is important. In the presence of the suffering church, the injustice of the world comes to light more and more. Thirdly, the Spirit has been given to the church in order to help her demonstrate that the world's perspective is wrong. The many illusions of the world have to be unmasked by the church.<sup>13</sup> Behind this analysis we find assumptions about the relationships between Gospel, culture and community. We need to be aware of the interplay of these three poles. Is it true that we as believers have been shaped not so much by the power of the Gospel as by our culture?<sup>14</sup>

One thing is clear; the church (at least the church in the West) finds herself in a crisis-encounter with culture, whether this is interpreted in a negative or positive way. How is she reacting and reflecting on this? According to the sociologist, Peter Berger,<sup>15</sup> there are three 'coping-strategies'. The first strategy is known as the deductive strategy. The church keeps going with a set of convictions that are seen as unchangeable, eternal truths. These truths have been written in the 'stones' of the holy texts. They have to be interpreted in terms of the revered traditions and should constantly be transmitted as received. This transmission takes place through church officials who have almost ultimate authority. There must be no compromise with the culture. The second strategy is known as the reductive strategy. The church connects tradition and context in such a way that the perspective of divine transcendence is lost. This results in such an

<sup>11</sup> Goheen, *The Missional calling*.

<sup>12</sup> A van de Beek, *Ontmaskering – Christelijk geloof en cultuur* (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.10-11.

<sup>14</sup> Hunsberger, *Acquiring the Posture*.

<sup>15</sup> P Berger, *The Heretical Imperative* (New York, 1979). Berger treats these strategies in the context of secularisation but they are equally applicable to mission today.

adjustment of the church to the culture that only human self-development or societal development is left as the purpose of the church. The last strategy is known as the inductive strategy. The church takes her starting point in religious experience. The experiences of the religious traditions will be studied in the light of their past meaning. From this perspective, the religious experiences of people today are described. Both perspectives are then connected. Tradition puts the current experiences to the test and vice versa. Recent empirical research shows that a reductive-inductive type of strategy is the most dominant one in the church in Western Europe.<sup>16</sup> This affects the identity of the church and indeed may empty it of specific convictions. These 'coping-strategies', and the way in which they operate are evidence of the fact that we need to look at the issue of identity.

### **The concept of identity: resident aliens**

Through suggesting ways of rediscovering and redeveloping the missional identity of the church I want to try to offer a small contribution to solving the current crisis. As stated above, the discussion about identity often takes place when we face a crisis. There is a tendency simply to use the word identity without defining a more precise meaning. In the end this leads to terminology which particular groups use in their own way. Theologians tend to speak about identity when they are referring to the nature of the church and to what is at the heart of the life of the church. Very often they want to express the belief that there is something essential that does not change.<sup>17</sup> Sociologists are more interested in identity as the cultural pattern that designates a specific group. Very often the starting point is taken somewhere in the past history of the group or organisation. Organisational experts who want to improve the vitality of a company or an organisation use identity in terms of self-definition. Psychologists would probably point to the individual and the inner life of the individual, with identity seen as inner consistency.

I will partially follow J. Vercammen<sup>18</sup> in his analysis of the concept of identity in the context of the church and its characteristics. Primarily, identity can be interpreted as referring to the subjective experience necessary to remain the same person or the same group. Identity then, for a group, is the self-definition of a group, in which this group expresses what it perceives as its own distinctiveness. According to Vercammen, this self-

<sup>16</sup> J A Ven van der, *Ecclesiologie in Context* (Kampen: Kok, 1993).

<sup>17</sup> G Dingemans, *Eenheid en verscheidenheid. Vijf ecclesiologische modellen*. In: Heitink, G. (ed.), *Een gezamenlijke trektocht. Meedenken met Jan Hendriks over gemeenteopbouw* (Kampen: Kok, 1998), p.129.

<sup>18</sup> J Vercammen, *Identiteit in Beraad* (Hilversum: Gooi & Sticht, 1997). Vercammen wrote a doctoral dissertation on identity development processes.



definition has emotional, ideological and behavioural aspects.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, for a local church of committed believers, such as a Baptist church, we need to speak about both individual identity (that of the church members) and collective identity. In the life of the church these are interrelated.<sup>20</sup> Identity functions very often as the 'social glue'; it holds the church together without it being described in a document for all the church members. In the thinking of Vercammen it seems that it has no strict empirical basis but has more of an expressive and appealing nature.<sup>21</sup> Identity also has a provocative aspect; it is a call to certain actions. This involves a deliberate choice in terms of commitments in a given context. In the life of the church, I suggest that the articulation of identity can be seen as one of the core functions of the church. Identity is the total of convictions, values and norms, which, together with the cohesion of the group, gives a structural consistency to a local church. This identity lives in tension with the goal of the church. The convictions and values have a directing influence on the programmes and actions the church undertakes. These programmes and actions are the ways in which convictions and values are expressed in practice.

A look at three characteristics of identity will be helpful for our further discussion. First of all, identity has a vertical and a horizontal dimension. The vertical dimension is related to the tradition in which the church is standing and to the biblical revelation on which the church bases its life. The horizontal dimension of identity is the (cultural) context in which we live. This dimension is of vital importance in the process of acquiring identity. The identity of the community of faith emerges at the intersection of these two dimensions. It is the result of a communicative interaction between Scripture and tradition, the community and the context.<sup>22</sup> At its very heart this is a hermeneutical process in which the church seeks to interpret her mission. Secondly, this process of forming identity is dynamic, involving the ongoing integration of new and different elements. The communicative process between Scripture, tradition, community and context takes the shape of a continuous learning experience. The result of this cannot be interpreted as something final, possessed by the church in an unchanging form. Rather, identity is the continuity of the self-experience of the church on the basis of the inherited faith, but a faith that is in dialogue and confrontation with changing

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.33.

<sup>20</sup> Vercammen holds the opinion that the collective identity of a church is conditioned by the ego-identity of the individual members. In his research he found that there was a lack of interaction between the collective identity of the churches and the individual identities of the members. Conventional behaviour seemed to block a renewal of the collective identity.

<sup>21</sup> Vercammen, *Identiteit in Beraad*, p.29.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p.35.

circumstances.<sup>23</sup> Thirdly, identity is to be seen as a practical concept. The result of the communicative process referred to above is not mere theory. A newly acquired identity should help the Christian community fulfil her tasks in society.

This analysis of the characteristics of identity and its main elements is helpful in order to analyse the situation of a specific community. We can speak about a problematic identity when there is a clear lack of communication between Scripture, tradition, community and context. Very often we see a withdrawal of the local church into an ideologically grounded self-image (the horizontal dimension is vague or even absent); or we may see the opposite extreme, in which the church adjusts herself too easily to the dominant culture (the vertical dimension is vague or absent).<sup>24</sup> One of the most frequent symptoms of a problematic identity is an attempt to escape into a negative identity, which expresses itself in: ‘we know very well what we do not want, but we do not know what we do want...’. It is obvious that the implicit or explicit concept of self-identity determines the structure of a general empirical-ecclesiological theory, which directs the church and its work. Many churches do not get to a point where they enter anew a process of identity renewal; however this is a necessary requirement if a church wants to return to her missional practice. The missionary church deals in all honesty with this serious question of identity, because it wants to show ‘why’ the Gospel is relevant to society. At the start of the process of finding fresh identity – sometimes called identity acquisition – there are two types of dialogue going on:<sup>25</sup> an internal and an external dialogue. Hunsberger shows that first of all there is an ‘inner dialogue with the culture inside of us’. The Gospel encounters much of the context (culture) within Christians. It challenges us to live out the Christian claims and show that these are integrated into who we are, in our own individual and collective identities. Only from this point onwards can there be a fruitful external dialogue with the ‘outside world’.

The return of the church to a mode of redemptive tension with the culture is not an easy one. We need more than just a simple theory of identity; in fact we need theological ‘building blocks’ to shape the church further and we need a process by which we can return step by step to the

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<sup>23</sup> R Erwich, *Het gaat om mensen. Een exploratief onderzoek naar het functioneren van gemeenteopbouwpro-cessen in drie Baptistengemeenten*. (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1999). Related to a new method regarding church-development in Baptist perspective, I proposed to work with the so-called ‘balancing identity’, in which the concept of identity is interpreted as experienced continuity but at the same time flexible.

<sup>24</sup> Vercammen lists four problematic forms of identity concepts: (1) subjectivism: a plurality of identity concepts with no unity, too many points of view; (2) split identity: there is a split between ‘who are we’ and ‘what is our task’, many tasks at the risk of many conflicts; (3) objective truth: focusing on holding on to the objective truth, restoration tendencies; (4) adjustment to what can be ‘sold’.

<sup>25</sup> G R Hunsberger in *Acquiring the Posture of a missionary church*. Source: [www.deepsight.org](http://www.deepsight.org).

life of redemptive tension and abandon easy attempts to resolve that tension. I believe that the concept of *koinonia* gives us a valid framework from which we can redevelop our missional identity. This concept also enables us to connect the above mentioned Biblical metaphor 'resident alien' to the church in mission.<sup>26</sup> The identity of the missional church can be summarised in the concept of *koinonia*. Seen from a Trinitarian perspective, God is involved in his creation and seeks, in his love, relationship and communication. God reveals himself to us and offers us reconciliation and lasting fellowship with him. Our Christian identity includes both the way in which we have opened ourselves up for God in Christ, welcoming him in, and also the way in which we have opened ourselves up for the other and welcomed the other into the lifespace we have received as a gift of God's love. The relationship God offers us, which is the basis for our own Christian identity, determines our discipleship. Both of these movements involve *koinonia*.

But how central is *koinonia*? Kuhnke<sup>27</sup> speaks about *koinonia* as the integrating concept of the other three basic functions of the church: *martyria*, *diakonia* and *leitourgia*. *Koinonia* also functions as the criterion by which the other three should be judged. It connects the saving reality of God to the reality of human beings and the world. Kuhnke has shown that *koinonia* is the basic term characterising both the norm and purpose of the believer's relationship with God and his Son and the social dimensions of the Christian community.<sup>28</sup> He discerns three dimensions: *koinonia* with Christ, *koinonia* among Christians and *koinonia* as continuation of the practice of Jesus. At the very heart of what the church is we find these three dimensions. The church members have been called to life in communion with God, fellowship with each other and faithful service and witness to the world. These three dimensions, depending on each other, are all a granted reality and call or task. *Koinonia* is both a gift which can be celebrated and a task which needs to be done by the church. We need to realise that this can be experienced and expressed in practice in different ways. Of course *koinonia* does not emerge simply because people find themselves part of a well constructed, rational Christian identity.<sup>29</sup> Thinking and talking about *koinonia* does not create it. It has its origins in Christ, calling people to follow him and to form a community of faith. Nonetheless, reflection of this central theme is important.

<sup>26</sup> There are more attempts to reformulate what is at the heart of a missionary church, e.g. Ch.van Engen, *Mission on the Way*. Issues in Mission Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).

<sup>27</sup> U Kuhnke, *Koinonia*. Zur theologischen Rekonstruktion der Identität christlicher Gemeinde (Düsseldorf, 1992).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.182.

<sup>29</sup> Contra Habermas who over-emphasises the communicative rationality.

My intention here is not to investigate the different practical appearances of this identity concept in today's church e.g. in terms of Baptist identity. The attempt is focused more on defining a concept which can help us redevelop our mission practice and which can be helpful to churches of different traditions. This concept needs also to be missiologically qualified, which we will do in the next paragraph. I noted that I would like to connect the Biblical metaphor of resident alien to the concept of *koinonia*. The reason for this is that I believe strongly in a Christian community as a 'contrast community'. The church living in communion with God, in fellowship with others and in faithful witness and service needs to have a clear perspective on her position. The metaphor 'resident alien' is very powerful in this sense. Shenk<sup>30</sup> states:

Starting with Abraham in the Old Testament and continuing in the New Testament with the apostle Peter, a primary metaphor for describing the status of the people of God in the world is that of 'resident alien' or variants of that phrase..... the model of the resident alien does not focus on the inward life of the disciple. This is no call to quietism. Instead, it keeps firmly in view the tension between God and the world and the status of the people of God in light of that tension. If the image of resident alien focuses on that tension, there can be neither retreat into a ghetto nor uncritical absorption into the world.

Stanley Hauerwas and W.H. Willimon use the term 'resident aliens' to convey the life of Christians in the world.<sup>31</sup> For them it is central. David Bosch follows them, putting the same thesis forward in discussing vital ingredients for a missiology for western culture.<sup>32</sup> My argument is that this identity should not be simply the identity of individual Christians; it should be an identity formed in *koinonia*. It is worthwhile listening to Shenk once more as he relates this metaphor to the coming Kingdom of God.<sup>33</sup> 'In the meanwhile', he states, 'the resident alien is continually pointing to the signs of God's coming and living out concretely God's reign as a counter-demonstration of what the world would be were it, too, submitted to God's will'. The community of God, living in communion with God, living in fellowship with one another and serving in the world, knows her place: she is in the world and yet not belonging to the world. This is where the redemptive tension returns in the identity and functioning of the church.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> W R Shenk, *Changing Frontiers of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999). pp.118 ff.

<sup>31</sup> S Hauerwas/W H Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989).

<sup>32</sup> D J Bosch, *Believing in the Future. Toward a Missiology of Western Culture* (Valley Forge: Trinity, 1995). (Christian Mission and Modern Culture).

<sup>33</sup> Shenk, op.cit., p.122.

<sup>34</sup> Shenk gives examples of areas: unmasking (!) controlling powers, mythic structure of violence, ethics and lifestyle etc.p.123-124.

## Missional identity and Mission practice

The importance of returning to this 'redemptive tension' cannot be overstressed. With Guder,<sup>35</sup> I believe we can speak about a necessary 'continuing conversion of the church'. In the above we have tried to clarify the ground for revisiting the discussion about identity and we have looked at some of the main characteristics. Still our task is not finished, because we want to put all this into an explicitly missiological perspective. Based on the loving relationship with God in Christ and through the Spirit, the church lives out her own identity, and shares with others, by worship and discipleship, mutual love, witness and service, Christ's love for a fallen world and the perspective of the Kingdom of God. She is only able to do this inasmuch as she is in continuous connection, through obedience to Scripture, with her own context and with the power of the Spirit. The church's own internal dialogue with Scripture and her relatedness to tradition has priority over her external witness, though they can never be separated nor played off against each other.

It is interesting to see how Newbigin's thinking about the forms of mission undertaken by the church relates to our ideas about *koinonia* and its three dimensions: communion with God in Christ, fellowship with each other and witness and service to the world. Newbigin distinguishes three different forms of mission.<sup>36</sup> First of all, the church witnesses to Christ by her own community life as a countercultural community, being sign, instrument and first-fruit of the Kingdom. The church can show itself to be a new social order.<sup>37</sup> The second form of the mission of the church is the corporate witness in evangelistic outreach and in service to others. Finally, the church's mission is expressed through the ministries of the individual believers at their work, home, direct neighbourhood etc. For Newbigin, this has some priority. All the members of the church are called to be signs of the Lordship of Christ in all the areas of public life. The first form corresponds, to some extent, to the first two dimensions of the *koinonia* concept – life in fellowship with God and each other – while the second and third forms correspond with the third dimension of life which follows the practice of Christ.

This kind of thinking about the mission of the church is very valuable for the current situation in Europe. In response to a

<sup>35</sup> D L Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

<sup>36</sup> L Newbigin, *Truth to Tell*. The Gospel as Public Truth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991). p.85; *The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Asian Churches in Decisive Hour for World Mission* (1960), p.28; *Our Task Today*. A Charge given to the fourth meeting of the diocesan council (Tirumangalam, 1951). p.6.

<sup>37</sup> Elsewhere, in dealing with 'Images of the church in mission', I paid attention to the powerful imagery of the 'New humanity'.

marginalisation of the church, a renewed commitment of the local church – but also the individual believers – to mission in the work place is of great importance. This involves equipping people for the life-long calling of following Christ in the world. Both Newbigin and also Bosch point to this. One of the elements that is crucial in developing a missiology in the current cultural climate is what Bosch calls ‘the ministry of the laity’<sup>38</sup>. According to Bosch, the missionary encounter with Western culture must primarily be a ministry of the laity. He speaks about revitalising the position of the believer. He holds the opinion that the witness of the church will be more credible if it does not come from people with offices in the church. Through lay people the public and private spheres of our society will be brought together again. Interestingly enough, Bosch refers twice to Newbigin in this context: once in relationship to the mobilisation of lay people, and once related to the importance of the local worshipping church. In terms of our discussion, for Newbigin the church-in-mission is a church which lives in the life of the Kingdom of God and shares from the resources of this life with others. Her life in Christ is contagious and attractive and clears the ground for sowing the seed of the Gospel.

At the outset of this article I formulated our task in terms of rediscovering and redeveloping the missional identity of the church in order to strengthen the practical mission work of the church. This is done with the hope that we can look at this new emerging position of the church more positively; she is a counter-cultural community. The church will probably be increasingly a minority church. Being at the margins offers the opportunity to redevelop the prophetic function which the world so desperately needs. Shenk refers to the trauma of Christianity in witnessing the break-up of Christendom.<sup>39</sup> We quote him now once more: ‘The prospect of a church stripped of the accoutrements of privilege and power and committed to servanthood ‘in the power of the Spirit’ promises a real gain’. Christian identity which consists of something other than communion with the Lord is foolishness. Christian faith is not a programme we can realise. Christian identity can be nothing else but life in Christ lived out in daily life. The second-century Epistle to Diognetus points out some very striking truths about this countercultural life as it was lived in that period. Van de Beek gives a shorter quotation of the text.<sup>40</sup> It may be summed up as expressing Christians and the church as resident aliens.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> D J Bosch, *Believing in the Future*. Toward a Missiology of Western Culture (Valley Forge: Trinity, 1995). (Christian Mission and Modern Culture). p.59.

<sup>39</sup> W R Shenk, *Changing Frontiers of Mission*. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999). p.188.

<sup>40</sup> A van de Beek, *Ontmaskering – Christelijk geloof en cultuur* (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2001). pp. 83-4.

<sup>41</sup> Source: <http://www.ccel.org/fathers2>. Epistle to Diognetus, V,5.

But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death, and restored to life. They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonoured, and yet in their very dishonour are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honour; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life; they are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred.

## Developing a missional identity

This is the last part of our journey in this article. It is about initiating and guiding a process of developing a better understanding and grasp of what this missional identity means within the church. I perceive this as a very important part of the return to this redemptive tension on which we have been reflecting. It is one thing to describe the vision; it is another thing to fulfil the vision. My experience with churches in which the leadership initiated a process of ‘rekindling the fire’ is that very soon the leadership feels that it has completed its work. It has prepared the programme through which the identity of the church will be sorted out. This is what the church will do! I will not describe the endless church meetings and further committee meetings that can take place in order to do what should be done about identity. Yet research in church development has shown that unless the development of identity and vision is a learning process and is owned by the individual members (as much as is possible) it will not succeed.<sup>42</sup> This should not be a surprise to Baptists. The involvement of all members is vital.

We should not, however, imagine that church meetings by themselves will resolve questions of identity. The reformulation or acquisition of collective identity is not always a very deliberate process but often takes place through implicit processes with partially unconscious

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<sup>42</sup> R Erwich, *Het gaat om mensen*.

dynamics. Further, the perception of the local church's (missional) identity by the leadership often differs from that which the individual (ordinary) church members understand as identity. In my research on church development I came to the conclusion that these two different perceptions were not synthesised enough in the various processes of renewal. It seems to me that a local Baptist church loses part of her identity if this same identity is not built to a certain extent by all the members. They will have to deliberately 'own' this identity. Collective identity refers to something that has been acquired through a highly authentic learning and listening process, not simply by taking a vote at a church meeting. A collective identity which is not the result of deliberate and active effort on the part of the believers has hardly any roots in collectivity.

This sense of collective identity shifts and changes over time. In her empirical study on Baptist identity issues, B. Marchlowitz found some interesting and challenging facts.<sup>43</sup> Her claim at the beginning of her study is that too often theological concepts, developed by deduction, have been put forward without testing them in the current life of the church.<sup>44</sup> Especially in the context of church development processes it seems that this is a problem. Marchlowitz studied several Baptist churches in Berlin from the historical point of view and in relationship to this she conceptualised their key theological principles – related to the understanding of Scripture, ecclesiology, baptism, the Lord's Supper, church discipline and church leadership<sup>45</sup>. She then took these concepts and created a typology which could be used in an empirical inquiry in order to test the principles in the current context of these churches. The ideal concepts were put forward to members of the church for their reaction. The outcome was striking and gives us as Baptists in Europe, who owe a great deal to the German Baptist tradition, much to think about.

The contemporary Baptist believer, at least in Germany, deviates from the ideal historical type. The result of the study points very clearly to a shift in the understanding of Baptist identity. Marchlowitz shows that this identity has developed and changes in quite a number of areas and seems to be influenced by the culture. In relationship to baptism, it is clear that baptism is now experienced much more as an 'initiation rite' into a specific social context, the church. Marchlowitz notices a shift away from the personal experience of conversion as a basis for baptism towards the concept of baptism as a rite of 'belonging'. There are also shifts in relation

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<sup>43</sup> B. Marchlowitz, *Freikirchlicher Gemeindeaufbau. Geschichtliche und empirische Untersuchung baptistischer Gemeindeverständnisse* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995). (Arbeiten zur Praktischen Theologie: Band 7).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. V-VI.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-118.



to the Lord's Supper. It seems that the Lord's Supper has more 'crypto-sacramental' traits than it had in earlier German Baptist life. Another change is in the perception of the general priesthood of all believers. Marchlowitz shows that there has been a gradual process of institutionalising the function and position of the pastor. As time has gone on, she notices a latent conflict with the ideal of the general priesthood of all believers.<sup>46</sup>

Within the life of local churches we need, therefore, to be aware of changing emphases and try to deal very sensitively with the issues at stake. The above research serves to reinforce again the importance of a process of identity development in which the dialogue between Scripture, tradition, context and community can be addressed. At times such a process may lead to a rediscovery of a lost identity. In terms of this process, there are very good and practical examples of how a church consultation on identity can be done. What is at stake here is not just a simple rational process. Rather this work is one that has a grand dimension. The vision is that from the community of faith the love of God in Christ can be proclaimed and shared to people who need to know Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

## Conclusion

We started with the marginalised position of the church and saw that the crisis in identity affects the mission of the church. Unless the church rediscovers and redevelops her given identity in Christ, her mission practice will inevitably be flawed. Through the expression of the life of the church as *koinonia*, which I have connected with the metaphor of resident alien, she can engage in today's redemptive mission and not lose the essential redemptive tension. In the development of her identity she moves into a learning process with constant new challenges. Part of this task may be to go back to the roots of our tradition. In the case of Baptists this means looking at the missional identity which has been expressed in the past. Yet beyond the identity of any one tradition in the church is a larger shaping story, the story of God's redemptive work in Christ. In the end this is true: what is important is that our identity is in the Lord. We have been saved by him who is the truth, the way and the life. The church has not been grounded and shaped in her own search for identity, but in the Lord.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.181.

<sup>47</sup> A van de Beek, *Ontmaskering – Christelijk geloof en cultuur* (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2001).

His PhD research was on the functioning of church development processes in Baptist churches. Dr Erwich is Director of Mission and Evangelism at IBTS, Prague, and is a member of the EBF Mission Division Core Group. He is Rector-elect of the Dutch Baptist Seminary.

## **DIRECTORS' CONFERENCES 2002**

Each year IBTS offers a series of conferences on important themes at the heart of contemporary church life and mission, designed to bring people together from many countries within the European Baptist Federation. Baptist seminaries and Unions principally, but not exclusively, within the European Baptist Federation are asked to draw these conferences to the attention of their people. Scholarship help is available to those wishing to attend from countries and Baptist communities not able to meet the costs.

**24 – 30 June**

### **The Practice of Christian Ministry in the Postmodern World**

Dr Parush R Parushev will co-ordinate a team exploring issues of ministry and the application of theology to the life of the church. This is a vital conference for those serving in the churches and exploring questions of relevance and authenticity.

**25 July – 1 August**

**Praha 2002**

The Rector, working with a team of specialist Youth Leaders offers the fourth year of this major Baptist youth event, built around a daily cycle of study, social action and late night contemporary worship. This important event for young people from throughout Europe has proved to be a life-changing force.

**2 – 8 August**

### **Baptists and Orthodoxy**

Dr Ian M Randall and Dr Parush R Parushev offer this conference to help Baptists understand the history and nature of the Eastern Orthodox tradition and to explore the relationship between Baptists and the Orthodox Churches as experienced throughout Europe today.

For more information keep watching the IBTS web site or email [White@ibts.cz](mailto:White@ibts.cz)

## **DEVELOPING THE CONCEPT OF AN ECO-SEMINARY**

### **Environmental Management Planning**

Concern for the protection of our environment has been a theme of the International Baptist Theological Seminary during the years it has been established in the beautiful natural setting of the Šárka Valley in Prague. Like most environmentally concerned institutions we recycle our paper, glass, plastic, batteries and metal. We seek to conserve energy and protect our water supply. However, we are convinced that this is insufficient as a response for a community such as ourselves.

In our Applied Theology degree we have a module relating to the wider ethical concerns, and a recent seminar led by our Kvestor, Mgr. Petra Živnůstková, on developing a sustainable environment, prompted the establishment of an Environmental Management Group. This will be formed from academics, staff, students and a specialist consultant to work on an agenda to become an Eco-seminary. Mgr. Živnůstková has a special interest in this field and did work on environmental law for her Master's dissertation.

We have been impressed by the work undertaken in the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN: [www.ecen.org](http://www.ecen.org)) and also by the Eco-Congregation Programme of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (ENCAMS: [www.encams.org](http://www.encams.org)).

We are delighted that Professor Graham Ashworth CBE DL, President of the Foundation for Environmental Education in Europe (FEEE), has agreed to be our consultant and will be visiting IBTS and lecturing and working with us for two periods during this year. Professor Ashworth is a former President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. He is a world authority on environmental issues.

We anticipate a report on proposals and progress in a future issue of the *Journal*.

**The Revd Keith G Jones**  
Rector, IBTS

## THE EURO-ASIAN ACCREDITING ASSOCIATION

The Euro-Asian Accrediting Association (EAAA) is a young organisation founded in 1997, in Kiev, by theological institutions from the geographic territory of the former Soviet Union. This vast territory is what is meant when the organisation speaks of itself as 'Euro-Asian'.

Its beginnings go back to February 1993, when representatives of a number of theological schools met in Moscow to discuss the future of theological education in the former Soviet Union. In those days, there was not much to accredit, as evangelical theological educational institutions had only existed for a few years. Some theological courses, run by the Baptists by extension, were a few decades old. All other schools began in the wake of Gorbachev's 'glasnost' and 'perestroika', in the nineties. Since then, many things have happened.

After a long preparatory period EAAA was born, and at its 5th Conference on Theological Education, held in St Petersburg in October 2001, 56 theological institutions participated. Some of these schools have received full accreditation for various Bachelor's programmes and two schools have started MTh courses validated by a British university.

But EAAA does not only stand for accreditation. It has hosted many educational conferences for Rectors, Academic Deans, Librarians and other staff involved in the educational process. One important project, initiated during the memorable February 1993 meeting, was directed at the publication of theological materials in national languages. As a result of this, many efforts have been made in the translating and printing of such material. During the last few years this was enriched by a project for the support of national authors enabling them to publish on national theological and church history topics. The Oral History Project resulted in local archive work which helped to uncover much interesting unwritten church history material from the older generation. One of its outcomes is a remarkable CD-ROM collection on the History of the Evangelical Movement.

Other CD-ROMs, containing various educational materials, are produced under the auspices of EAAA, such as the Large Theological Library – for theological schools, and Bibliology – for pastors and church ministers. Access to cyber tools has been made available to EAAA member-schools by a joint ProQuest Religion Database subscription on the Internet.

These are extensive and revolutionary developments which will have an influence on the future of the many states of the former Soviet Union. This progress has been made possible by a great deal of help from the

West, but the EAAA Director is a Ukrainian who lives in Odessa, Sergei Sannikov. A Russian saying seems to come true here: We need much time to get started, but then we drive fast (*My dolgosapryagayem, no potom bystro yedem*).

**Dr Peter Penner**, Lecturer in Biblical Studies, IBTS and Director of Mission and Evangelism-elect, IBTS

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Ian M Randall and David Hilborn**

***One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance***

**Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 2001. 394 pp., paperback**

**ISBN 1-84227089-3**

The Evangelical Alliance (EA) is a major force in European Christianity through national EAs and the European Evangelical Alliance. This book tells the story of the British expression of the Evangelical Alliance. However, given the original aim of drawing together evangelicals across the world and the role the United Kingdom EA has played in Europe, it is also a very helpful resource for anyone within the European evangelical scene.

Of course, the story is about people and movements that have shaped European Protestantism since the mid 1800s. It is salutary to be reminded that the beginnings of the EA in 1846 – to bring individuals together around common convictions – pre-date by many years the more formal ecumenical movement between denominations. It is a story not only about individuals, then later local congregations, uniting together to express themselves as one body around commonly held convictions, but also about uniting against others who might be perceived as undermining evangelical Christianity – liberals, modernists, Roman Catholics or whoever.

Ian Randall and David Hilborn have done us an immense service by charting this movement, from the first attempt to form such a body by a small group of people drawn from Anglican, Wesleyan Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregationalist and Baptist traditions, through to the contemporary United Kingdom EA, with its efficient media machine and renewed hard work on theological reflection.

The book, whilst charting a story of growing work and influence, does not seek to hide the cracks of missed opportunities and evangelical disagreement. What would the EA have been if the original conference of representatives from Europe and the USA, anticipating a world body, had not foundered on the contentious issue of slavery? Would the EA have wielded more influence and had greater membership from the believers' church tradition if it had not insisted on a written statement of faith? How many others might have participated in the EA had they not felt excluded by the inclusion of a statement about ministry and sacraments?

The outcome of the London Conference of 1846 was the formation of a body for the United Kingdom (with separate organisations emerging later in the USA and elsewhere in Europe). The opportunity to forge a truly international evangelical ecumenical body was lost for many years. The original EA was an organisation of individuals, recognising the fears of some that anything else might threaten the denominations. In later years the EA looked to congregational and organisational membership and, in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, began to see denominational membership.

The writers look at some important moments in the history of the EA, not least the call from the late Martyn Lloyd-Jones in 1966 for evangelicals to abandon the theologically mixed mainstream denominations and forge a new evangelical community; and also the highly significant development of TEAR Fund in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Then there is a chapter assessing the so-called 'Toronto Blessing'. Here, the events are much nearer in time and we may need to wait somewhat longer before we can have an accurate estimation of whether this really was a time of refreshing for churches or an insignificant passing phenomenon. However, Randall and Hilborn do their best to work with the available material and offer a judicious view.

One thing stands out over recent years. Under Clive Calver and Joel Edwards the United Kingdom EA has been able to have a more focused programme than the classic denominations, providing a whole range of services to member churches. One such focus has been that of seeking media coverage and this strategy has paid dividends in ensuring the exposure of the attitudes and concerns of the evangelical community to the general public. In this area the EA has outstripped the major UK free churches who have virtually no media profile. It might well cause some denominational leaders to ponder the money spent on public relations for little result, over against the way Calver (General Secretary of the EA in the 1980s and 1990s) and later Edwards have claimed the eye of the media.

This book is an important resource for understanding the development of a significant organisation within the broader movement of

evangelicalism. It is certainly a reminder of an important stream of Christian ecumenical endeavour. All those concerned about evangelical co-operation in Europe and beyond should be sure to read this well-researched history.

**The Revd Keith G Jones**  
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**James P. Sterba**

*Three Challenges to Ethics, Environmentalism, Feminism and Multiculturalism*

New York, Oxford University Press, 2001, 153pp., £9,87

ISBN 0-19-512476-6

James Sterba, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame, at the very beginning of his book argues that 'traditional ethics has yet to face up to three important challenges that come from environmentalism, feminism, and multiculturalism. Failure to meet these challenges has meant that no matter how successful traditional ethics has been at dealing with the problems it recognises, it has as yet failed to deal with the possibility that its solutions to these problems are biased in favour of humans, biased in favour of men, and biased in favour of Western culture.' (p 2)

For the purpose of this review we shall concentrate on his view of environmentalism and traditional ethics (pp 1-49).

Animal exploitation – factory farming and animal experimentation – is one of the biggest challenges to traditional ethics. Sterba gives examples of how deep this problem is by pointing to three experts – philosophers – in this field: Peter Singer, who maintains that animals have interest, but are only sentient beings; Tom Regan, who proposed a Kantian environmentalism but feels sorry only for 'experiencing' subjects and not for all living subjects; and Paul Taylor who took up the challenges of both of them and developed his own Kantian Environmentalism, which has been, called 'biocentric individualism'. Taylor argues that 'the assertion of human superiority is groundless' and on this he builds up his theory of biocentric pluralism. Sterba takes time to explain the theory and its principles. He does not argue with Taylor, but rather takes the reader step by step through the individual principles. When he is done with the reformulation of Taylor's environmentalism he feels that he did not take into account the conflict between holists and individualists. He thinks that the combination of holism and individualism is very problematic and does

not satisfy either party. At this moment he leaves Taylor and his theory and goes further in arguing that 'it would be good for the whole environment if people generally, especially people in the first world, adopted a more vegetarian diet of the sort that animal liberationists are recommending'. He is using statistics to prove that by reducing livestock we could use the farmland in a better way and grow grains for human consumption instead. This would not only help people in the first world but also prevent animals from suffering in factory farming. Then he comes back to Taylor and rejects his theory of biocentric pluralism, as it would ask for unreasonable sacrifice on humans to accept that all species are equal. This interpretation of species equality can be found in socialism and Sterba argues that his interpretation of equality is found in welfare liberalism or libertarianism. Sterba also briefly offers an interpretation of equality based on religious grounds. When commenting on Genesis 1:28 he argues that humans are not permitted by God to dominate non-human nature in the way Western culture understands it but rather as a caring stewardship which imposes limits on our use of them. He follows this with a statement that 'all species, like all human beings, are the same in one relevant respect – they count morally'. And this is the challenge for traditional ethics. Sterba realises that none of the responses is successful but as there is no other alternative available, traditional ethics should incorporate and accept the following principles:

- Human Defence – actions that defend oneself and other human beings against harmful aggression are permissible even when they necessitate killing or harming individual animals or plants or even destroying whole species or ecosystems;
- Human Preservation – actions for meeting basic needs of human beings;
- Disproportionality – actions that meet non-basic or luxury needs of humans are prohibited if they aggress against the basic needs of individual animals and plants, or of whole species or ecosystems;
- Restitution – appropriate reparation or compensation is required whenever the other principles have been violated.

He concludes by saying that only by incorporating these principles into traditional ethics will the challenge of environmentalism be given its due.

This unique book offers not only new challenges to traditional ethics but provokes its readers and takes them to new and unexplored paths of ethical and moral thinking.

**Mgr Petra Živnášková**  
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